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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 002401

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY
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TAGS: [PGOV PHUM PREL](#) [EAID ASEC ZI](#) [MDC ZANU PF](#)

SUBJECT: GOZ VIOLENCE AGAINST MDC TARGETS COUNCILORS

REF: A. HARARE 2354

- [B.](#) HARARE 2087
- [C.](#) HARARE 2193
- [D.](#) 01 HARARE 2171
- [E.](#) 01 HARARE 2594
- [F.](#) 01 HARARE 2774

Classified By: Political Officer Audu Besmer for reasons 1.5 b/d

Summary:

[1.](#) (C) Since the September 28 - 29 Rural District Council elections, ZANU-PF supporters have carried out a violent campaign of retribution against winning MDC councilors and MDC supporters in districts that elected MDC councilors. At least one MDC supporter was beaten to death. Winning (and losing) MDC councilor candidates, and polling agents have been beaten, ordinary MDC supporters have been beaten and raped, MDC supporters' houses have been burned, and MDC offices have been attacked. Violence and food denial continue to be effective tactics, as feeding and protecting their families are higher priorities for most Zimbabwean oppositionists than challenging a government they despise. End Summary.

[2.](#) (C) Since the September 28 - 29 Rural District Council elections, ZANU-PF supporters have carried out a campaign of retribution against winning MDC councilors and MDC supporters in districts that elected MDC councilors. Other reports of violence spanning the election period are now surfacing.

MDC Supporter Tortured and Killed

[3.](#) (U) On October 21 according to MDC officials and press reports MDC supporter Isaac Karimete died of wounds inflicted when he was abducted and tortured by ZANU-PF militia in the run-up to the Rural District Council elections in late September. Karimete was one of more than a hundred MDC supporters who were abducted and taken to the Gunduza school in Gunduza, which was being used to detain and beat MDC supporters, one of three sites set up by ZANU-PF in Mashonaland Central province before the September 28 - 29 elections. (The other two were in Mushinye and Chimoyo.) Known or suspected MDC members were taken to these three sites, pressured to defect to ZANU-PF, and beaten or raped when they refused. After Karimete's detention, militia members told him to leave his home in Muzarabani. Though he was able to identify at least four of his assailants, there were no reports of arrests in the case.

Winning Councilors and Losing Candidates Beaten

[4.](#) (C) According to press reports, on October 12 ZANU-PF supporters led by the party's Hwange East District Chairman and war veteran Gerald Moyo stoned and beat recently re-elected MDC Kamativi district councilor Matthew Ngwenya, and his wife in Kamativi, Matabeleland North. According to Ngwenya, a mob of ZANU-PF supporters, including the losing ZANU-PF candidate, approached their home saying, "today you will be in trouble," and "we want you dead". The losing candidate reportedly said, "we need to kill a donkey" referring to Ngwenya. The mob stoned the house, breaking all the windows, and pried the doors off the hinges to get at the Ngwenyas. They were force marched to a nearby bush area where they were separated and both beaten, Matthew to the point of unconsciousness. When Poloff interviewed the couple at the Amani Trust offices (a local NGO treating victims of political violence) on October 24 in Bulawayo, they each had bruises and cuts over their faces and bodies, and Matthew's left arm was broken in two places. The couple is afraid to return to Kamativi. ZANU-PF officials had previously pressured Ngwenya to return to the party; he defected to MDC in July 2002 while serving as councilor of Kamativi.

[5.](#) (U) According to MDC officials and press reports, on October 18 a truckload of ZANU-PF youth militia members allegedly sent by the ZANU-PF Provincial Chairman for Matabeleland North, Jacob Mudenda, beat MDC supporters and 16 newly elected MDC councilors gathered for their swearing-in ceremony in Binga. Jeffrey Nyoni, the MDC councilor for

Silakenge ward, as well as Mr. Mdhimba, the ZANU-PF Provincial Administrator who oversaw the ceremony, were in critical condition as a result of the beating. (Note: Mdhimba, though a ZANU-PF official, was beaten for organizing the swearing-in ceremony in accordance with his official duties. End Note.)

16. (U) According to MDC officials and press reports, on October 12 the newly elected councilor for Mzola ward in Nkayi, Matabeleland North, Themba Dlomo was addressing a post-election meeting when ZANU-PF supporters, led by war veteran Francis Nyoni, attacked everyone assembled. Police responding to the scene arrested twenty-one MDC supporters, twelve of whom were remanded in custody and due to appear in Hwange Magistrate's Court on October 29. There were no reports of ZANU-PF supporters arrested. MDC officials reported that Nyoni and his group were planning to attack another MDC councilor, Thomas Nyathi, of Matshokotsha ward in the same constituency.

17. (U) On October 1, according to MDC officials and press reports, the day after results of the Rural District Council elections were announced, unknown assailants assaulted Veni Muleya, a newly-elected MDC councilor in Mutsheseo ward in Binga, and Sofia Ngwenya, the MDC losing candidate for Tinde ward in Binga, and burnt their homes to the ground.

18. (U) According to MDC officials and press reports, on September 28, the first day of voting for the Rural District Council elections, ZANU-PF youths and war veterans assaulted and beat Francisca Ngwende, the MDC candidate for Murehwa South's ward 24, and her polling agents as they waited for transport to take them to polling stations. Ngwende suffered a fractured left hand, and her polling agent, Rumbidzai Mutava, was hospitalized for injuries sustained in the attack. On January 31 ZANU-PF supporters had burnt Ngwende and her husband's (who is a war veteran and MDC member) house to the ground. Though the assailants are known in both cases, no arrests have been made.

Polling Agents Arrested / Beaten

19. (U) On October 24, according to MDC officials and press reports, war veterans in Zaka assaulted and severely beat Last Njokoza, an MDC polling agent for the Rural Council elections. The war veterans reportedly called a meeting on the pretext of distributing food. They singled out MDC supporters in the crowd including Njokoza and several other polling agents and beat them in front of the crowd, threatening to beat anyone else who supported the MDC. Police said they were investigating the matter; no arrests were made.

110. (U) According to press reports, on October 28 around midnight police arrested eleven MDC polling agents for the Insiza by-elections from their homes in the Bulawayo area. They were held for a day, assaulted, questioned and released. According to press reports Bulawayo police spokesman, Smile Dube, refused to comment on what charges they faced.

MDC Supporters Held During Elections, Beaten, Raped

111. (U) According to MDC officials and press reports, on September 21 (a week before the Rural Council elections) ZANU-PF youths abducted Solomon Mazarire, the MDC Chairman for Chadereka ward in Muzarabani, in broad daylight from the vicinity of a ZANU-PF rally in Gunduza. Addressing the rally, Nobbie Dzini, ZANU-PF MP for Muzarabani, criticized the youths for carrying out the operation in broad daylight and emphasized that such activities should be done at night so as to avoid notice. Mazarire was held in Chimoyo and repeatedly beaten. On September 22 ZANU-PF militia members abducted Mazarire's wife Mercy, and their oldest daughter Lynette (18), from their home in Chadereka and held them in Gunduza. Lillian (16) was detained briefly, but freed allegedly to take care of their other five children. Militia members raped Lynette and beat both Mercy and Lynette with barbed wire and logs. All three were released on October 11. Militia members confiscated MDC material and maize from the Mazarire home and forced the family to leave Muzarabani. There were no reports of arrests.

MDC Councilors Forced to Defect to ZANU-PF

112. (U) According to MDC officials and press reports, ZANU-PF supporters have pressured MDC councilors to join ZANU-PF. In Beedy (between Matobo and Kezi, Matabeleland South province) the recently elected MDC councilor was forced to defect to ZANU-PF. To maintain the peace, his constituents have reportedly agreed to the switch--expected to be formalized soon. In ward three in the Gwanda district of Matabeleland South, winning MDC councilor Nkanyiso Nala went into hiding and then defected to ZANU-PF.

MDC Supporters' Homes Burned / Destroyed

¶13. (C) On October 17 war veterans in Matobo (south of Bulawayo) burned to the ground the house of John Sibanda, allegedly because Sibanda is an MDC activist, and had refused a request by war veterans to be a "settler" on the nearby Godwin farm earlier this year. In an interview with Poloff on October 24, Sibanda did not report any injury to his family, but recounted that five other homesteads of families who refused to be settlers have been burned in his area recently.

MDC Offices Attacked / Damaged

¶14. (U) According to press reports, on October 28 about 100 ZANU-PF youths in Border Gezi "green bomber" uniforms attacked the MDC offices in Bulawayo with stones, bricks, axes, picks and logs. The front of the building, office equipment in the front rooms, five party vehicles, and one private vehicle were damaged extensively in the 15-minute attack. MDC officials reported the identities of many of the assailants to the police, who did not commit to investigating the crime. On the same day, suspected MDC youths attacked a school in Bulawayo belonging to the ZANU-PF Deputy Political Commissar; the chronology of the two events is unclear.

Comment:

¶15. (C) These cases suggest a campaign of retribution, organized and constructed to intimidate people and convince them to drop their support for the MDC. The two-pronged strategy of violence and food denial is proving very effective at consolidating ZANU-PF's hold on power (Refs A, C), as Zimbabweans sympathetic to opposition views are understandably more interested in feeding their families and protecting them from harm than in challenging a regime they increasingly despise. End Comment.

SULLIVAN